

News from Ed Markey

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MARKEY, LOWEY QUESTION SECURITY AT INDIAN POINT

Letter to NRC cites low morale, inadequate training for security forces

Washington, DC: Representatives Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Nita M. Lowey, who represents communities surrounding the Indian Point nuclear reactor in Buchanan, NY, today released a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) requesting specific information about recent reports that a majority of the security guard forces at Indian Point do not believe they could adequately defend against a terrorist attack.

"When the people in charge of guarding the reactor don't think they can defend the plant, the NRC ought to take notice and make some immediate changes," said Rep. Markey. "The guard forces don't think they are sufficiently trained, they don't think the security regulations are sufficiently strong, and, perhaps most disturbingly, they believe that Wackenhut, the company in charge of security at the reactor, falsified a report that said that the guards had no concerns about morale. How can the residents of New York feel safe when the security guards don't?"

"Since September 11, 2002, we have made the commitment to provide the best possible security to the American public," said Lowey. "How can the NRC claim Indian Point is safe in light of this report? Entergy's internal report and James Lee Witt's report regarding the inadequacies of the evacuation plan for the areas surrounding Indian Point make clear that monumental changes must take place to ensure the safety of our communities."

On January 25, 2002, Keith Logan, a former investigator with the NRC Office of Investigations and a licensed attorney, submitted a report on his investigation of security and guard force morale at Indian Point 2 to Entergy (the licensee of Indian Point), which had commissioned the report in November 2001. The Entergy report concluded that:

- Only 19% of the security officers interviewed believed they could adequately defend the plant against a terrorist attack.
- The guard forces do not believe that the Design Basis Threat is sufficient for handling post-September 11th terrorist threats.
- 59% of the security guard force believes that a "chilled environment" exists among the security forces, and only 42% of those who raised issues with management believe that those issues were adequately addressed.
- As many as nine out of ten guards do not complete specific tactical training, which is required by Entergy's own security policy for Indian Point.
- Guards believed that up to half of the security force was physically unfit to thwart a terrorist attack due to lax physical agility requirements.

- Critical security equipment, including surveillance systems and alarms, were defective, according to guards who were interviewed.

This "chilled environment" can only have increased in recent weeks with the possible retaliation by Entergy officials against Foster Zeh, a security officer at Indian Point 2 who has raised numerous security concerns with his managers, and who has been placed on indefinite administrative leave.

Reps. Markey and Lowey requested information on the following:

- What the NRC was doing to address the Entergy report's conclusion that 12% of the officers interviewed believed they had been retaliated against after raising concerns about or making suggestions for improvements to security at Indian Point. In addition, information related to the decision to place Mr. Foster Zeh on administrative leave was requested.
- Information related to reports that a training coordinator at Indian Point may have violated NRC security regulations by downloading a large amount of safeguards level information onto his laptop, which he takes home every night.
- Information related to security practices, training, firearms and changes to security practices, training and firearms made by Entergy after receiving the security report it commissioned.
- Information related to why it is taking so long for the NRC to undertake a rulemaking to permanently upgrade the Design Basis Threat security regulations.
- What the NRC is doing in response to the Entergy report's conclusion that false information on security guards' concerns was provided by Wackenhut.

Rep. Markey concluded, "The picture that emerges from this situation is quite disturbing." He added, "The NRC has a responsibility to the public to assure that the safety and security of this sensitive facility is not sacrificed to corporate executives more interested in maximizing profits than minimizing the risk of a successful terrorist attack at a nuclear facility just 24 miles from New York City."

"The NRC continues to put the industry first – ahead of the public's safety – by ignoring the post-September 11th reality," said Lowey. "The agency refuses to upgrade the Design Basis Threat or to address the concerns of the guards charged with protecting the nuclear facility located in the most densely populated area in the nation. It's time for the NRC to put up or shut down. The NRC must prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is protecting the public or close Indian Point."

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